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ABSTRACT

A "Parenting Girls Project" was operated within the Teenage Parent Program in the Owensboro City School System, Kentucky. Objectives involved continuation and expansion strategies: raising student assessment scores in parenting attitudes on the Performance and Attitudinal Scale (PAS), increasing student assessment scores in career awareness on the PAS, and improving scores in specific parenting skills on pre- and posttests. Of 18 girls served, 11 completed the program. All babies were developing normally. Parenting attitudes improved, and all students showed a gain in career awareness and specific parenting skills. Plans for the next year included increasing expectations of student achievement on all measures. Due to funding decreases, the certified vocational teacher would be available for less time and would teach fewer classes and provide less home instruction. (The PAS is appended.) (YLB)

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Vocational Education
Preparing Girls to Care for Self and Families Project
Annual Report
July 1, 1989 - June 30, 1990

Sarah L. Harrison, Director

Project # C-0500 4837 0541 8825

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I. Rationale

In recent times a growing concern for what appears to be an unending cycle of adolescent pregnancy in our country has been brought to the forefront. Faced with the frustrations of being unprepared for parenting, these teen parents are more susceptible to dropping out of school, living below the poverty level, and their children, in turn, becoming teen parents. These assumptions can be substantiated with data from a variety of sources which found: (1) only half of those who gave birth before age 18 complete high school and earn half as much money, (2) 71% of families who receive Aid to Families with Dependent Children had their first child as teenagers, and (3) 82% of girls who gave birth at age 15 or younger were daughters of teenage mothers. With the assumption that this data from reputable sources is accurate, one sees an even more dismal future for this group of teens in Owensboro. As recently as February, 1986, a federal government report ranked Owensboro as having the fourth highest rate of unemployment among metropolitan areas in the United States. It would seem, therefore, that these youngsters--if not already--will soon find themselves locked into a less-than-acceptable way of life. Thus, they find themselves trapped in a cycle.

In an attempt to confront the problem since August, 1961, the Owensboro City School System has operated the Teenage Parent Program, an inner-city program for pregnant teenagers from all public and parochial schools within Daviess County. This is housed in two renovated classrooms in a building adjacent to Owensboro High School. Students ordinarily transfer to the Teenage Parent Program, usually referred to as TAP, at about five months into pregnancy which does not occur with any regularity calendarwise thus creating an extremely fluid enrollment. Enrollment fluctuates from some eight to seventeen youngsters of all ability levels in grades 7-12 often from as many as seven different schools. TAP has become multi-functional in that it: (1) until the birth of the baby, offers a full-time in-school day program in which students can earn high school credits in the basic four academic areas, a business course, as well as parenting skills and career awareness and (2) during the four-to-six-week convalescent period after childbirth, provides instruction in the home to facilitate a smoother transition from TAP back to regular school.

A "Parenting Girls Project" now in operation in the Teenage Parent Program has significantly molded lives of youngsters, their babies, and their families.

II. Objectives

The "Preparing Girls Project" will produce more capable single teen mothers who will be more likely to finish their educations and join the labor force. Some objectives which have to do with project administration are:

(a) To revise assessment instruments
(b) To purchase supplies
(c) To secure a work/study student as a teacher aide

Three objectives involve continuation and expansion strategies:

(a) Students will demonstrate raised assessment scores in parenting attitudes an average of one level on the Performance and Attitudinal Scale (see Appendix)
(b) Students will increase assessment scores in career awareness an average of one level for the attributes in the Performance and Attitudinal Scale.
(c) Students will improve scores in specific parenting skills an average of 45% on pre- and post-tests.

III. Activities and Achievements

As we close another school year, it is satisfying to reflect upon our progress. This year we served a total of 18 girls. Of those, 11 completed the program. Two of those who dropped out were only enrolled for three days. A third one already had a three-year-old child and had dropped out three times before coming to us. We felt good with being able to keep her in our program this second time for about 11 weeks so we could help her formulate solid plans for the future. A fourth one did not complete with us but returned to her high school to be with her twin sister and her friends whom she immediately began to miss. Having home problems after twelve weeks with us at the close of the semester, one moved out-of-town. Later, after the baby was born, she moved back and completed the year at her high school. A sixth student completed our program but then did not return to her high school. A seventh one unexpectedly informed us of plans to move out-of-town immediately after childbirth when we were ready to begin home instruction. Another three--poorly motivated--dropped out after much counseling to the contrary. Three students we consider neither noncompletions nor completions. We believe a 63% rate of completions is admirable for a student population in which nationwide two out of three pregnant youngsters drop out.

An overriding concern in this program is the health of the infant. This year contrasted last year in that we had no premature births, and--with the exception of one full-term baby who died 24 hours prior to birth--all other births were full-term with no complications. Our latest reports indicate that all babies are developing normally.

Our budget did not allow for a regular teacher aide this year. However, we were able to use a work/study student from Owensboro Junior College of Business funding only part of a minimum wage salary for fewer weekly hours. First semester, we had three--each for very short periods. Each left for a good reason. But we were extremely fortunate to have an excellent person the entire second semester.

The staff feels that efforts expended with these youngsters have been worthwhile. Testing results show that the project has made these more capable teen parents who will be more likely to finish their educations, find successful employment, and, as a result, develop wholesome homes.

Quarterly reports included detailed descriptions of activities utilized including selected modules from the Kentucky Vocational Home Economics Department along with cited enrichment activities. These activities enabled us to meet and/or surpass our objectives:

A. Revised assessment instruments would be utilized. The staff-made tests were again re-worked to better align them with staff goals.

B. Students would demonstrate raised assessment scores in parenting attitudes an average of one level on a five-level scale on the "Coping with Parenting" section of the Performance and Attitudinal Standard (see Appendix A).

To avoid re-opening old wounds, the student whose baby died was not post-tested for parenting attitudes. Total parenting attitudes improved an average of 1.2 levels.

The parenting attitudes inventories are staff-devised, assessed, and keyed to the "Coping with Parenting" section of the Performance and Attitudinal Standard"--Part 1 (Appendix A) which consists of ten traits having five levels each.

C. Assessment scores in career awareness would increase an average of one level on pre- and post-tests.

Career awareness results are based upon all students, some of whom were unable to complete the unit. Again, in spite of incomplete work the goal was exceeded in that all students showed an average gain of two levels of a possible five levels.

Staff-devised instruments are keyed to "Career Awareness"--Part II of Performance and Attitudinal Standards (Appendix A) which consists of seven traits having five levels each. It is clear that these youngsters critically needing an awareness of the work world received just that.

D. Students would improve scores in specific parenting skills an average of 45% on pre- and post-tests. Even with the fluid enrollment described in the rationale, evaluation of parenting skills based on scores of all students who were enrolled for testing of each skill showed an average gain of 66.8%. This data is based upon pre- and post-tests on classroom units taught.

A culminating activity which helped us to truly realize the fruits of our labors was that of a graduation tea. We were able to invite seven former students in our program who had persevered to completion of high school and one of which from a community college after having a second baby. They are graduating from a combination of three high schools in addition to the community college. They were encouraged to bring the babies, and the three able to attend did so. All three have plans to enter the field of nursing. One planning to marry a serviceman later this summer will begin her education when they are settled.

IV. Recommendations on Findings

Achievements outlined in the previous section show--without question--that every goal was remarkably exceeded. It is clear that experiences from this project has helped pave the way to a brighter future for these young girls as they prepared to care for themselves and their families. In our estimation, the money invested was well-spent.

Again, as funding decreases, costs increase. Now, with making the best possible use of a $10,000 grant--reduced from $15,000, which itself was inadequate this year--we will not be able to serve our students at anywhere near the level in the past.

With this in mind, the project will have to be altered. Services which can be provided with a budget of $10,000 include the salary and fringe benefits for a certified vocational teacher for .3 time, which will allow her to teach two class periods one semester and one class period the other. During the two-class-period semester, we will (a) raise assessment scores in parenting attitudes an average of three fourths of a level out of a possible five levels for the attributes on the Performance and Attitudinal Scale (b) increase career awareness an average of one level out of a possible five levels for the attributes on the Performance and Attitudinal Scale (c) improve specific parenting skills an average of 45% on post-tests. During the one-class-period semester, we will: (a) raise assessment scores in parenting attitudes an average of three-fourths of a level for the attributes on the Performance and Attitudinal Scale, (b) increase career awareness an average of three-fourths of a level out of a possible five levels for the attributes on the Performance and Attitudinal Scale, (c) post-test scores for approximately one fourth of the specific parenting skills normally presented will be raised an average of 45%.

Additionally, a .5 time certified teacher would have provided staff flexibility so that, during convalescence from childbirth, students could have been provided a smoother transition from TAP back to regular school through home instruction provided by TAP staff. We will now provide home instruction to about half of the students.

This report causes us to take stock of failures as well as accomplishments. Upon its conclusion, the project is seen as a highly worthwhile endeavor. The staff looks forward to another year of hopefully continuing to mold--if even at a much-reduced level--the lives of troubled teenagers, as well as those of their families and their young offspring.

TEENAGE PARENT PROGRAM--COPING SKILLS
PREFORMANCE AND ATTITUDINAL STANDARDS

APPENDIX A

Date _____

Student _____
Grade _____

Pre-Assessment ____
Post-Assessment ____

		Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	Unsatisfactory	Rem
	I. Coping with parenting						
App. B	1. Demonstrates a postivie self-image.						
App. C.5	2. Has a positive outlook on her future in general.						
App.C.5	3. Has a Realistic outlook on her future in general.						
App. C.7	4. Has positive attitude toward own parents.						
App. C.8-11	5. Accepts differences in others						
Staff Judg.	6. Is cooperative with fellow students.						
App.C.12,18,21	7. Has a positive view of parenthood.						
App.C.12,18,21	8. Has realisitic view of motherhood.						
App.C.20-22	9. Exhibits a positive attitude toward children.						
App.C.20-22	10. Exhibits a Realisitic attitude toward children.						
App.C.22-24	11. Approaches childbirth positively.						
App.C.22-24	12. Has a realisitc view of childbirth.						
App. H-T	13. Possesses the necessary skills for routine child care.						
	II. Career Awareness						
App.C.25-29	1. Has a Realistic attitude toward work.						
App.C.25-29	2. Has a positive attitude toward work.						
App.D.6	3. Knows how to contact employer.						
App.E	4. Can fill out a job application						
App.F	5. Conducts herself properly in a job interview.						
App.G	6. Is able to interpret a paycheck stub.						
App.F	7. Has awareness of appropriate dress for a job.						
App.D.1-5	8. Understands the importance of reliability on the job.						

Comments: _____